

improve efficiency, coordination, and customer experiences for internal and external stakeholders and the public, including the protection of EPA's facilities and other assets nationwide that are terribly important to our government; IT management, for example, inside the EPA.

It is my strong belief that Amanda has the requisite knowledge, expertise, and experience to carry out these critical functions at EPA.

I am also very proud of the fact—and I thank the chair and ranking member of the EPW committee—that she got passed out on a voice vote.

Now is the time to confirm Amanda so she can begin to oversee these critical management activities at the EPA.

So I, therefore, ask unanimous consent that the Senate consider the following nomination: Executive Calendar No. 560, Amanda Howe, of Virginia, to be Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; that if confirmed, the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that no further motions be in order to the nomination and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

The Senator from Utah.

Mr. LEE. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I made communication with the EPA as to how to resolve a concern that I have. It should be an easy thing to resolve. I am waiting to hear back a response from them. In the meantime, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Virginia.

Mr. WARNER. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. LEE. Sure.

Mr. WARNER. It is my understanding your concern with the nominee is not about the nominee's qualifications.

Mr. LEE. It relates to a matter at the EPA.

Mr. WARNER. Thank you.

I thank the Senator from Utah.

Mr. President, I do hope this matter is resolved. I believe Amanda needs to be installed and doing her job. She has been up for this nomination literally for months.

I also feel this is just one more example—I think probably every Member of the Senate, including the Presiding Officer, has a number of individuals he supports. I know many of my colleagues on the Republican side have nominees they support. The kind of blanket holds that are taking place on way too many of our nominees means that this President can't put in place his team.

The Presiding Officer was a Governor. He is about to be replaced by another Governor. I was a Governor. I can't imagine running an administration a year into my term if I didn't

have two-thirds of my appointees serving in office.

The Presiding Officer, I know—I will end very briefly—is an extraordinarily valuable member of the Intelligence Committee. We see America's national security concerns on a daily basis. Those national security concerns will be better met when every major nation in the world has an American Ambassador. It is great that we have State Department personnel, but without that Ambassador in these offices—Amanda is not up for ambassadorship, but there are a host of Ambassadors in critical nations that need to be confirmed.

I hope—as we wind down these last few days of this session before the end of the year, I implore my friends on the Republican side, give these folks who have waited for months and months and months a kind of assurance of their ability to serve, especially when they are noncontroversial. Please remove their objections. Stop objecting. Let's let the government have these people, personnel in place. I hope Amanda Howe will be one of those. I look forward to my friend from Utah resolving this issue.

I thank the Presiding Officer for listening to my extra 5 minutes.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Iowa.

OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, we all know that our country is facing a drug crisis. I think it is pretty well known, as the CDC has reported, that over 100,000 Americans died from a drug overdose over a recent 12-month period.

Although fentanyl drugs are heavily responsible for this, we are battling the fight on many fronts. For instance, synthetic drug use is evolving and, of course, very dangerous; same thing for methamphetamine, which is very much on the rise.

Too many lives are being lost. That is why I have been busy working on legislation to stop this epidemic, bills like this title of a bill: Stop the Importation and Manufacturing of Synthetic Analogues Act of 2021.

For too long, criminals have been skirting the law. Do you know how they do it? By changing the chemical makeup of a drug. They keep ahead of regulation-writing. They keep ahead of Congress making laws. Congress is kind of in a situation of playing the deadly game of whack-a-mole as law enforcement tries to keep pace with savvy drug dealers. My bipartisan bill nips this deadly cycle in the bud. This bill would control synthetic substances similar to known drugs while the more time-consuming testing, research, and analysis can be performed.

Also, methamphetamine abuse and use is very concerning. The volume and purity of meth smuggled from Mexico into the United States is at a near all-time high. To address this dire situation, I joined with Senator FEINSTEIN

of California to reintroduce the Methamphetamine Response Act. This bill declares meth an emerging threat and requires the Office of National Drug Control Policy to develop and implement a national plan to prevent meth addiction and overdoses. This is a necessary step to combat meth in Iowa and, of course, in the rest of the country.

The Senate passed, very recently, the Meth Response Act. In fact, it was passed this week. The House must act quickly to get the bill to President Biden's desk. Meth is rampant, and action should not be delayed.

I also joined with Senator FEINSTEIN to reintroduce a cannabidiol and marijuana research bill to encourage scientific and medical research on marijuana. Instead of rushing into legalizing or decriminalizing marijuana, we need a better understanding of that plant and its potential benefits but also to know what the side effects are. Let's not put the cart before the horse here in the Senate.

I have also been active as cochairman of the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control. Along with the chairman, Senator WHITEHOUSE, we held hearings examining the Federal response to the drug overdose epidemic and the nexus between illicit drug trade and corruption.

I also convened a field hearing in Iowa to hear from grassroots, the experts there and the constituents there, about our own State's efforts—drug control, prevention, and treatment efforts. At that hearing, we had a sad story by a father, Rod Courtney from North Liberty, IA, sharing his story of losing his son Chad 5 years ago due to fentanyl. Rod's powerful testimony is just one instance of the struggles families face from drug abuse.

Stories like Chad's are why I sent multiple letters to the Biden administration to proactively and permanently schedule fentanyl-related substances. We did get a positive response. I am glad to see that the Biden administration has taken my advice and probably the advice of a lot of other Senators as well and recommended permanently scheduling fentanyl drugs.

Yet the administration proposes shielding fentanyl dealers from mandatory minimums. These dealers are potential killers. This watered-down position flies in the face of our current crisis with fentanyl. We have to keep our neighborhoods safe and must hold poison peddlers accountable. That is particularly true with fentanyl offenders.

I am happy to say that, with my support, Congress has extended the life-saving scheduling authority into February, but don't be fooled—we still need a permanent solution.

With the close of 2021 on the horizon, it is natural to reflect. One hundred thousand overdose deaths is an unspeakable tragedy. Each loss is a loved one, a friend, or a neighbor. We must find solutions to this crisis, and I look forward to being part of that solution.

I hope my colleagues will join me in moving those bills.

CROSSFIRE HURRICANE

Mr. President, on another matter, on January 19 of this year, then-President Trump issued a memorandum to the Attorney General, the Director of National Intelligence, and the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency. That memo directed these Agencies to declassify certain Crossfire Hurricane records for public dissemination.

We all know about the fatal defects and political decisions that were made during Crossfire Hurricane. That type of improper government conduct demands maximum transparency. The only way you can trust the government is to make sure that everything that can be made public ought to be made public, and the only exceptions to that would be personal privacy, national security issues, and intelligence matters. Everything else is the public's business and can be made public without hurting people or hurting national security.

On February 25 this year, my staff and Senator JOHNSON's staff requested an update from the Justice Department on what has been declassified. We want to know when a full and complete set of declassified records will be provided to the Congress of the United States.

Since February, our respective staffs have followed up with the Justice Department on countless emails and phone calls. Attorney General Garland has consistently failed to provide a substantive update.

We are now in December, and Attorney General Garland hasn't produced a single declassified record to Congress relating to Crossfire Hurricane. More importantly, Attorney General Garland has kept the American people in the dark.

Now, the Justice Department hasn't claimed that the Durham investigation is a basis for refusing to provide these records, so what is the delay all about? Is the Attorney General trying to shield the Justice Department and the FBI from further embarrassment? Because that is why we don't get a lot of stuff public. It is because some bureaucrat is going to be embarrassed by the information coming out.

The other week, it was reported that an alternative Mueller report has been located at the Justice Department. Now, I don't know what that is all about. Reportedly, DOJ could release it soon. This report, if you want to call it a report, was drafted by Andrew Weissmann's team while he served on Special Counsel Mueller's Trump investigation.

Now, I want you to know this is the same Andrew Weissmann who wiped his government phone while working on that investigation. Many of his colleagues did the same thing to over a dozen phones.

These acts may have deleted Federal records that could be key to better understanding their decision-making process as they pursued their investigation and wrote their report.

On September 11 last year, I wrote to the Justice Department, asking about the potential violation of the Federal recordkeeping laws. I also asked what steps the Justice Department had taken to recover these deleted records.

In response, then, the usual response: The Department failed to answer these questions. Instead, it provided a letter from the inspector general rather than providing a full and complete answer for itself.

The inspector general said that 96 phones were assigned to the Mueller team, but the Justice Department can't locate 59 of those phones. Initially, the Justice Department took possession of 79 of 96 phones.

Based on the information provided to me and Senator JOHNSON from the inspector general, it appears, then, that 74 were reviewed for official record-keeping purposes; that is, only 74 out of 96 phones.

Accordingly, 22 of Mueller's team's phones weren't reviewed for Federal recordkeeping purposes so we need to know who those phones belong to. This is beyond suspicious, and the Attorney General doesn't seem to have a care in the world.

The inspector general told us there is a document called the SCO Inventory and Property Transfer Document. That would give us a better idea of the Federal recordkeeping process during the Mueller investigation. To date, Attorney General Garland has failed to produce that document.

So what we have here is yet another example of a complete and total Justice Department failure. On the one hand, the Biden Justice Department has no idea what records should be classified—should be declassified pursuant to President Trump's January 2021 declassification order.

The Biden Justice Department has failed to tell Congress what, if anything, it has done to retrieve the missing Mueller phones. The Biden Justice Department has also failed to provide the Mueller team's existing text messages and other records.

Yet, can you believe it, on the other hand, the Justice Department will reportedly soon release an alternative Mueller report because a Federal court made them do it.

Congress has an independent constitutional oversight authority, and that authority requires the executive branch to be responsive to oversight requests, irrespective of any Federal litigation.

The obvious message from the Biden Justice Department is that it will stiff-arm congressional oversight that could prove embarrassing to the Federal Government—or it is like Garland saying: Screw you, Senators.

Our institutions won't survive with that way of doing the people's business. Transparency brings accountability. Probably my colleagues are tired of my saying that—transparency brings accountability. But none of us should stop working to hold government offi-

cials accountable for their improper conduct, regardless of their political party.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION ON THE SUPREME COURT

Mrs. FISCHER. Mr. President, 8 months after President Biden asked them to study Supreme Court reform, the Presidential Commission on the Supreme Court of the United States has finally released its report.

I want to begin my comments by recalling the backstory behind this group.

The President created this Commission to appease some Members of the Democratic Party. These progressives want to pack the Supreme Court with Justices who will put their agenda before the Constitution.

Not all Democrats belong to that group. I see the Court packers as more of a radical fringe who can't stand the thought that the Court may make decisions that they don't like.

But instead of lending this fringe element the legitimacy they hoped for, the Commission's nearly 300-page report simply lays out the arguments for and against Court packing, and then makes no recommendation.

In fact, the lawyers, professors, and former judges the President appointed were deeply divided on the issue of adding more Justices to our Nation's highest Court.

Twenty-nine of the Commission's 34 members were liberals. But even with this supermajority of left-leaning scholars, the Commissioners still expressed their "profound disagreement over whether Court expansion at this moment in time would be wise."

If you can believe it, many Democrats in Congress are fond of saying that expanding the Supreme Court for political reasons is actually unpacking it.

Representative JERRY NADLER, the Democrat from New York who chairs the House Judiciary Committee, has claimed that unpacking the Court by expanding it would "restore balance" and that Senate Democrats "should immediately move to expand the Supreme Court."

I want to be as clear as I can about this. Adding Justices to the Supreme Court of the United States simply because you don't like some of the decisions they make—that is Court packing.

President Franklin Roosevelt explored this idea in the 1930s, after the Supreme Court struck down key parts of the New Deal.

President Biden's Commission's own report called FDR's attempt to pack the Court a "needless, futile, and utterly dangerous abandonment of constitutional principle."

No President has been reckless enough or shortsighted enough to push for it since FDR. President Biden said